

Week Four Handout

“God & Caesar – The Ancient Modern Clash”

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Render unto Caesar:

A New Testament Perspective – Paul and the Epistles

What does Paul mean when he exhorts believers to “submit to the governing authorities?” Are there limits and qualifications to this command?

In addition, we will attempt to harmonize the OT and NT views of religion and politics to arrive at a ‘whole Bible’ view.

The Ministry of Paul

1. Paul’s claim of Roman citizenship
 - Acts 22:22-29
 - *Civitas = citizenship*
 - Roman citizens numbered only 6 million men in AD 47 in the census of Claudius.
 - Roman citizens had particular rights, privileges, and duties.

2. Paul’s Trial before Festus and appeal to Caesar
 - Acts 25:1- 26:32
 - Festus was Roman procurator (administrator-governor); replaced Felix
 - Paul arrested under Felix (Acts 22:25), tried before Felix (24:1-3), held in prison for two years (24:27), and then tried before Festus very early in his mandate (25:1-5)
 - It was the right of every Roman citizen to have his case heard before Caesar himself (or his representative) in Rome. This was the highest court of appeal. However, Nero was Emperor at this time.
 - **Question:** Was Paul’s appeal to Roman citizenship self-defense or strategic?
 - Acts 19:21
 - Romans 1:10-15
 - Romans 15:20-29

3. Submission to governing authorities

- Romans 13:1-7
- J.W. Allen, professor of History at the University of London (1928)
 *“The thirteenth chapter of the Epistle of Romans contains what are perhaps **the most important words ever written for the history of political thought**. Yet it would be a gross mistake to suppose that men, at any time, took their political opinions from St. Paul.*
- Everett F. Harrison, Commentary on *Romans* (Expositors Bible Commentary Series)
 “This is the most notable passage in the New Testament on Christian civic responsibility.”
- *Respublica Christiana* and the Medieval Concept of “two swords” and “two kingdoms”
 - Pope Gelasius 1 (492-496 AD), influential letter *Duo Sunt*
 - *Regnum* and *Sacerdotium*
 - Jean Bethke Elshtain: “Gelasius proffered a doctrine of imperial or secular rule (*regnum*) and spiritual or episcopal rule (*sacerdotium*) that laid the groundwork for subsequent thinking and controversy surrounding *ecclesia* and empires, and kingdoms and kingships.”
 - This religio-political paradigm lasted for a millennium until the Reformation.
- Roman law and the Jews
- Background of Emperor Claudius’ (41-54 AD) expulsion of the Jews from Rome
 - Acts 18:2
- Roman law and the experiences of Paul
- Key Words:
 - (13:1) *Everyone*
 - (13:1) *Must submit*
 - (13:1) *Governing authorities*
 - (13:1) *Authorities*
 - (13:1) *Established*
 - Compare with Romans 13:6-7
 - Compare with Hebrews 13:7, 17
 - Spiritual leaders vs. civic leaders
 - (13:2) *Rebel*
 - (13:4) *Servant*
 - (13:5) *Necessary*
 - (13:5) *Submit*
 - (13:5) *Wrath & conscience*

4. Compare with Peter’s injunction

- 1 Peter 2:13-17
 - (2:13) *Submit yourselves*
 - (2:13) *Every authority*
 - (2:15) *God’s will*

- Discussion questions:

1. Are these injunctions for believers or followers of Christ only?
2. What does it mean to “submit” to governing authorities? In what matters is submission applicable?
3. Does the form of government matter as to how we are to submit? Is it easier or harder to submit in one form of government versus another? Is submission different in a democracy than in other forms of government?
4. Does God establish all authorities – even evil ones? Nero? Stalin? Hitler? Why?
5. Does this passage forbid all rebellion or revolution against political rulers? Is “non-violent” rebellion and civil disobedience allowable? Were the Jews “wrong” to rebel against the Romans in the Great Jewish Revolt (66-70 AD)? Were the British Loyalists more biblical and Christian than the American Revolutionaries?
6. Under what circumstances are we to “obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29)?
7. How is the government the “servant” (*diakonos*) of God?
8. What are our attitudes, manners, words and actions to be as citizens in a democracy when dealing with policies and people with whom we disagree?

Jim’s Principles for a Whole Bible Interpretation

1. **Use** _____.
2. **Understand and apply** _____.
3. **Wrestle** _____.
4. **Be** _____.

5. Pray for your leaders

- 1 Timothy 2:1-4
 - *Requests, entreaties*
 - *Prayers*
 - *Intercession, petitions*
 - *Thanksgiving*
 - *Kings and all those in authority*

- Clement of Rome (d. 99 AD)
 - First Apostolic Father of the Church
 - Consecrated by Peter
 - Pope from 92-99 AD
 - The Roman Emperor of the day was Domitian (81-96 AD) who severely persecuted the Jews and the Christians.
 - Wrote *The First Epistle of Clement of Rome to the Corinthians* (c. 96 AD); written about the same time as the *Book of Revelation* (c. 95-97 AD).
 - Online version found at *Early Christian Writings* <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com>

- 1 Clement 60:2 – 61:2 – Prayer for Leaders

Lay not to our account every sin of Thy servants and Thine handmaids, but cleanse us with the cleansing of Thy truth, and guide our steps to walk in holiness and righteousness and singleness of heart and to do such things as are good and well pleasing in Thy sight and in the sight of our rulers.

Yea, Lord, make Thy face to shine upon us in peace for our good, that we may be sheltered by Thy mighty hand and delivered from every sin by Thine uplifted arm. And deliver us from them that hate us wrongfully.

Give concord and peace to us and to all that dwell on the earth, as Thou gavest to our fathers, when they called on Thee in faith and truth with holiness, [that we may be saved,] while we render obedience to Thine almighty and most excellent Name, and to our rulers and governors upon the earth.

Thou, Lord and Master, hast given them the power of sovereignty through Thine excellent and unspeakable might, that we knowing the glory and honor which Thou hast given them may submit ourselves unto them, in nothing resisting Thy will. Grant unto them therefore, O Lord, health peace, concord, stability, that they may administer the government which Thou hast given them without failure.

For Thou, O heavenly Master, King of the ages, givest to the sons of men glory and honor and power over all things that are upon the earth. Do Thou, Lord, direct their counsel according to that which is good and well pleasing in Thy sight, that, administering in peace and gentleness with Godliness the power which Thou hast given them, they may obtain Thy favor.

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